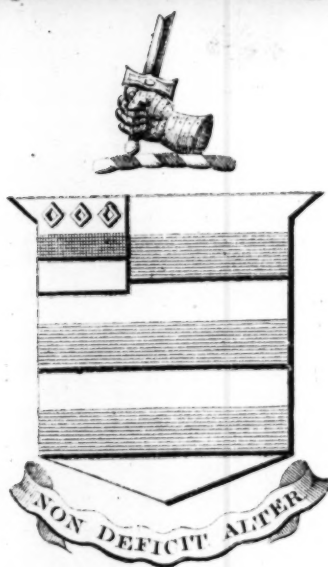
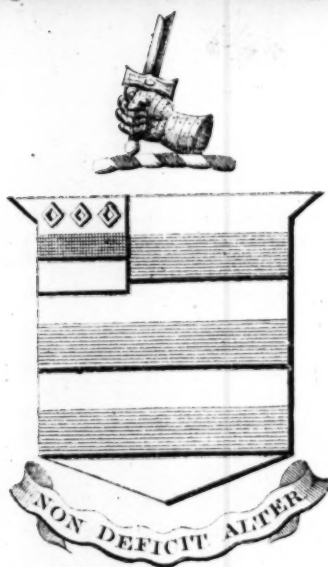
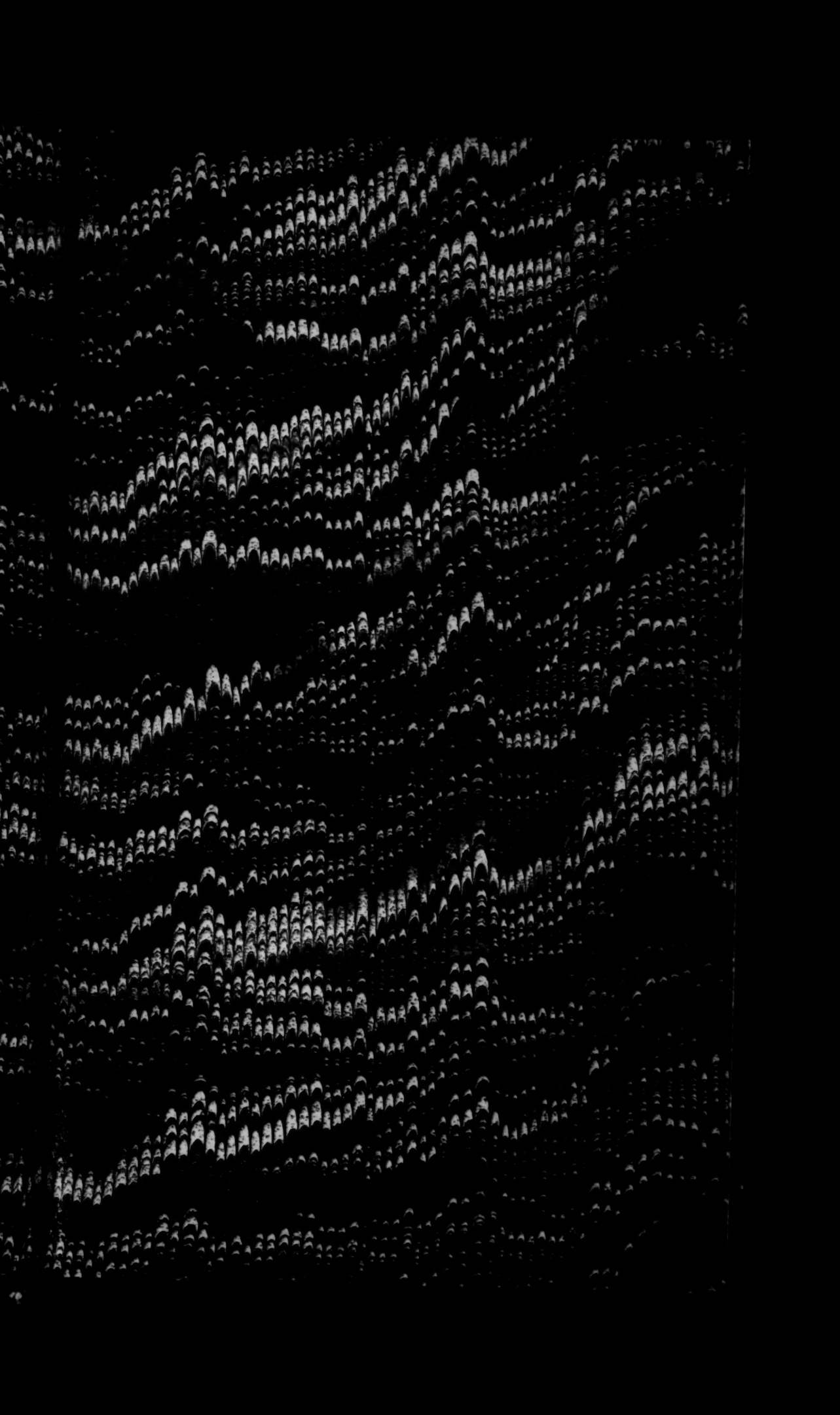




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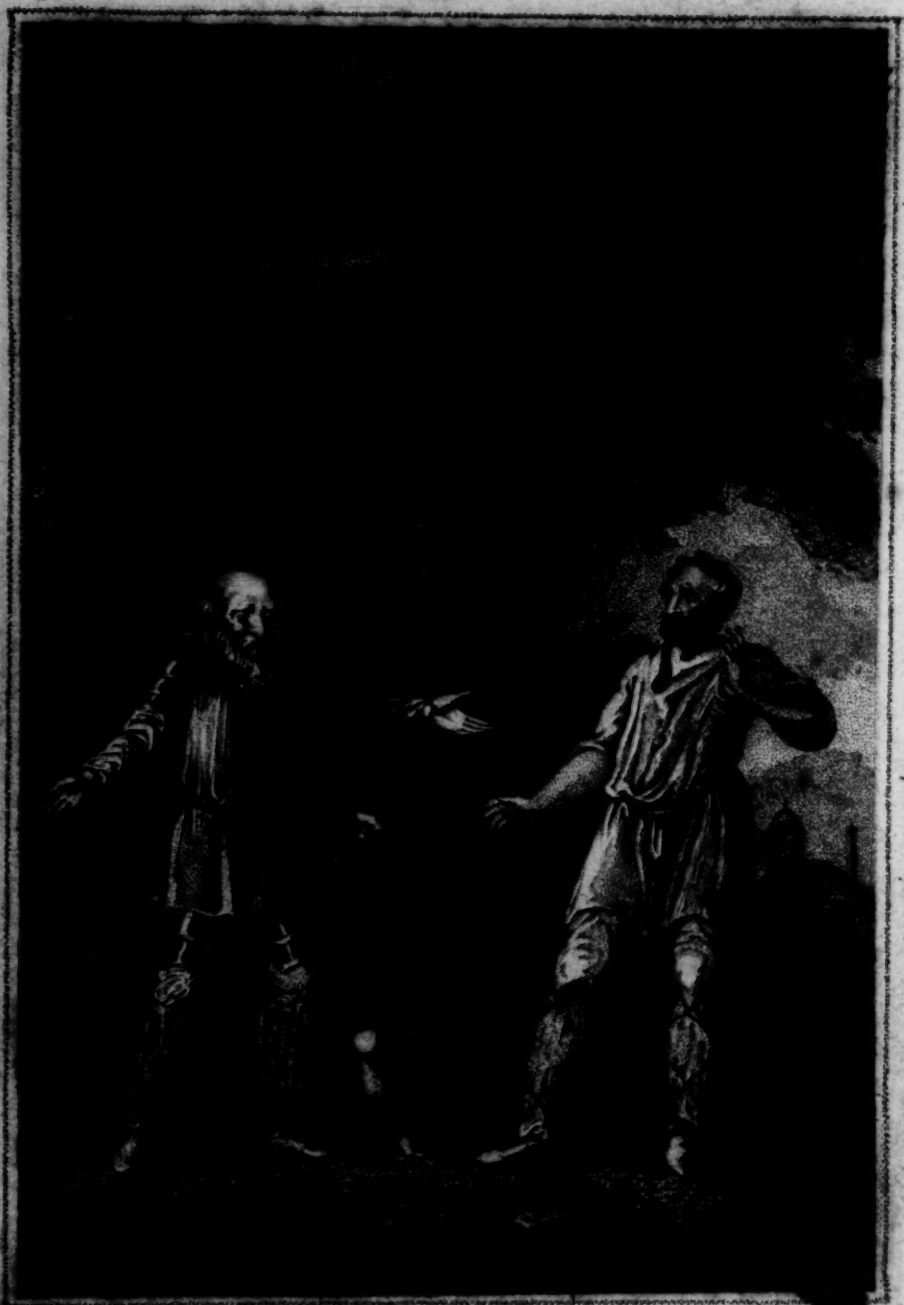


Stacy 18th.



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Drawn by Acc. Robertson.

Engd by G. G. N.Y.

BEL: Yet think not that the barb'd shafts of Misfortune
 Were spent on you alone, sage Giliเมอร์;
 For in the Person of an old blind Beggar
 You may trace Belisarius. Act. 2. Scene. 1.st

3

BELISARIUS:

A

TRAGEDY.

BY

MARGARETTA V. FAUGERES. K



NEW-YORK:

Printed by T. and J. SWORDS, No. 99 Pearl-street.

—1795.—



DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

M E N.

BELISARIUS, *the Roman General.*

JUSTINIAN, *the Roman Emperor.*

TIBERIAS, *the Emperor's Nephew.*

GILIMER, *the Captive King of the Vandals.*

BESSUS, { *a Courtier retired from business, the foe of Belisarius.*

THE PRINCE OF BULGARIA.

MATHON, *the Prince's Friend.*

ARSACES, *a Bulgarian Noble, in love with Julia.*

BARSAMES, *High Treasurer, and favourite of the Empress.*

AGRESTIS, *the Friend of Tiberias.*

COURTIERS.

BULGARIANS.

SOLDIERS.

ATTENDANTS.

A CHILD, *the Guide of Belisarius.*

W O M E N.

EUDOKA, *the Daughter of Belisarius.*

THEODORA, *the Empress.*

JULIA, *the Sister of Tiberias, in love with Belisarius.*

AMALA, *the Wife of Gilimer.*

LADIES.

THE
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DAMNED PERSONS

P R E F A C E,

EVER indulgent to the weakest emanations of genius, a benevolent public has enabled the author of *BELISARIUS* to bring forward her first Dramatic Performance; and though it may not be as perfect as those pieces which are produced by authors who have paid long and strict attention to the Theatre, yet she flatters herself, that as an historical Tragedy, it will meet with a kind reception.

She has endeavoured to avoid all that unmeaning *rant* which forms so conspicuous a part in most productions of this kind, together with the awful *asseverations* and *maledictions*.—What their effect upon the *stage* may be, she knows not, but to a mere *reader* they are ever tiresome, and frequently disgusting; for which reason, as *BELISARIUS* was from its commencement intended for the closet, she has attempted, in their stead, to substitute concise narrative and plain sense.

It was her intention to have prefixed a list of the subscribers names to the piece, but as several people objected to having their's printed, it was thought unnecessary to publish only a part of them. However, she has with many thanks to acknowledge the encouragement she has met with.

NEW-YORK, May, 1795.

BELISARIUS.

ACT THE FIRST.

SCENE---*An outer Chamber belonging to the Palace.*

Enter the EMPEROR.

EMPEROR.

'TIS not in man to cherish chaste content
In his tumultuous soul; discordant passions,
Now rising like the billows in a storm,
Carry him far beyond where reason reigns,
And *now* exhausted by the boisterous fray
Drop far below her sphere---
He who is *poor* longs for the chink of gold,
The unsocial pomp of stiff magnificence,
The jargon of a thousand senseless terms---
And thinks that *greatness* is exempt from woe;
Nor knows that dainties pall upon the taste,
And pleasures made too common lose their relish.
Pleasures! can *grandeur* boast of pleasures then!
Ah no---'tis but another word for *care*:
Nor can the sparkling of a diadem
Eclipse its mournful meaning---
The precious *gale*, that through the lattice blows
On the tir'd body of some sleeping slave,
(When weary day hath sunk beneath the main)
Cools the high ferment of his feverous blood,
And gives *him* slumbers sweeter; but to *me*
Its gentle whisperings seem like sounds of death---

From dreams of *mutiny*, and *schemes*, and *murder*,
 I start, and think some bold conspirator
 Breathes near my bed, and springing up dismay'd,
 I stalk around my chamber a sad prey
 To torturous reflection---my broken rest
 Sheds a damp on my heart---I'll stretch me here;
 Perhaps calm sleep, the dear oblivious power,
 May yield by day the bliss that night denies.
 [*Throws himself upon a sofa, and drops a curtain before him.*]

Enter TIBERIAS and AGRESTIS.

AGRESTIS.

You look, my friend, as though some mighty woe
 Hung on your heart, and weigh'd down all your smiles.
 And such a gloom sits brooding on your front,
 That if a friend, with cheerful countenance,
 Does look upon you, your aspect so dismay'd
 Straightway discomforts him.---
 Tell me, *Tiberias*, what is it grieves you?
 Have your unwary eyes, by wily *love*
 Entic'd, stray'd on some youthful object fair,
 Who, heedless of your sighs and soft confessions,
 Your midnight watchings, and uneasy days,
 Laughs with your rival, and upon your face
 Casts a disdainful glance of pitiless pride?
 Or has---

Tib. You cannot guess the cause.

Agr. Is it so wonderful, so secret then?

Tib. Oh yes, 'tis very wonderful indeed!

Agr. What is it?

Tib. It is that *BELISARIUS*, the brave,
 Though injured and debased beyond redress,
 Can yet forgive!

Agr. How know you it?

Tib. I have seen him.

Agr. You have?

Tib. Yes, the last day that Felix held his feast,
Where the young nobles were conven'd for sport,
Ere well the *viands* were remov'd, and we
Began to fill our goblets, one arriv'd,
Whose wrinkled forehead bald, and homely garb,
Pronounc'd him old and poor---with port erect,
Nor bent by age, nor humbled by distress,
He enter'd the pavilion, led by a child,
And ask'd from us a shelter for the night:
Which being granted, on a little stool
The boy plac'd the old man, for he was blind.---

Quite inattentive to his aged presence
We spoke without reserve each busy thought;
And as the bowl went round, our warming hearts
Panted with deeds of fame---we talk'd of war,
The fate of kingdoms and of laws corrupt---
And had we mingled *power* with *desire*,
Each one had sway'd the empire of the world.

Agr. Truly you form'd a loyal company.

Tib. A smile sarcastic, ere we were aware,
Brighten'd the features of our hoary guest,
And when one ask'd the reason, he replied,
In accents mild, 'twas our *simplicity*!

Agr. And what said you?

Tib. Nothing; for in a soft bewitching strain
He check'd the rudeness of our speech unguarded,
And in the most pathetic language wail'd
Sad *Rome's* undone condition;
Reproach'd the selfishness of crafty men
Who rul'd the *Emperor*, and sold for gold
The favours due to merit.
Experienc'd wisdom floated from his lips;
And a deep silence testified our wonder;
Till a bold youth, whose eyes did swim with wine,
Rose sudden from his seat, and stammering said,
"And who are you, that in this lordly strain
"Would school your noble hosts, in state affairs?"

The *stranger* gravely answer'd "BELISARIUS."

Agr. Heavens!

Tib. Deep glow'd each crimson cheek, with conscious
shame

Thus to have laid our follies before *him*,

Whom all the world had reverenc'd for his virtue;

And no full eye dar'd raise its quivering beam

To that *scar'd face*, unconscious of its glances.---

But awful *silence* spoke our blushing thoughts

More eloquently than a gust of sound.

Agr. Said he aught more?

Tib. Yes, but not till, with a long burden'd sigh,
I interrupted the dumb stillness---"Ah! (said I)

"And can you still, though injur'd beyond measure,

"Cast down from GLORY's pinnacle, disgrac'd

"And made more wretched than earth's vilest offspring?

"And can you still, with ardour and affection

"Attempt to wake in us a sacred love

"For this our country?" The venerable chief

Serenely answer'd me, "And *who*, young man,

"Is *he* from whom you do expect to hear

"Lessons of virtue, and of public spirit?

"Is it the venal Courtier---the great man,

"Whose wealth flows on him like a sea--- whose path

"The hand of luxury hath pav'd with gems?

"Is *he* to be your teacher?--- No, my friend,

"'Tis the Old Warrior, whose hardy limbs

"The storm of *war* hath fiercely beat upon,

"Who *feels* the value of the truth he preaches---

"Who acts from *principle*, and not for hire!

--- "And though neglect and shame await his labours,

"Still loves his *sovereign*, and reveres the laws!"

Agr. And where is the old veteran now?

Tib. Perhaps at home---for early the next morn,

While dull *Intemperance* bound us to our pillows,

He rose and journey'd on toward his castle.

BELISARIUS.

11

---But yonder comes my melancholy sister
With her sad lover; let us leave the place!

Agr. Your sister! sure I heard that she was dead.

Tib. It was so rumour'd; but Bulgaria's prince
As a state prisoner hath long detain'd her;

---She early was betroth'd to BELISARIUS,
And lov'd him tenderly; but THEODORA,
Fearful lest the proud soldier should aspire
One day to wear the royal diadem,
Sent *Julia* off by force, and prison'd her
For many a lingering year.

Agr. How came she to be freed?

Tib. I have not time to tell the story now;
But meet me at the Theatre to-night
And you shall hear it; until then adieu.

[Exeunt different ways.]

Enter ARSACES and JULIA.

JULIA.

Leave me, Arsaces, I am tir'd of love;
'Tis an old theme; a very foolish one---
Besides, it makes me sad to see thee thus---
I pray thee leave me.

Ars. Ah! *Julia*, all my soul is fix'd on thee;
When driven from thee, I leave myself behind;
In thee are all my bosom's wishes center'd;
Nor does my heart a single comfort own
When thou art absent---Pity me, sweet maid!
Think on the tedious years of dire suspense
And languishing disease that I've endur'd,
And let one feeling word now leave thy lips
To ease the anguish of a bleeding breast.

Jul. Oh! I want *pity* for my hapless self---
None have I to bestow---I too have lov'd;
But, ah! like thee I did not love in vain---

My BELISARIUS had a tender heart
 That answer'd all my wishes---never sigh
 Bore from my soul the index of distress;
 Nor did a tear (save tears of sudden joy)
 Ere damp the down upon this faded cheek;
 Then youth, and health, and gaiety were mine,
 And constant love, and oh! how blest was I!
 ---Often, with childish transport have I hung
 Upon his neck, and round my fingers twin'd
 His glossy curls, and scatter'd rich perfume
 Upon his robes; while my enraptur'd *lover*
 Cover'd the busy hand with ardent kisses,
 And press'd me to his heart---days of blessedness!
 Oh! why did ye exist so short a time?
 Or why exist at all? (*Weeps.*)

Arf. My darling Julia, drop these vain regrets,
 For BELISARIUS is no longer thine;
 Is he not wedded?

Jul. Too sure he is, and therefore I *will* weep,
 For he *was* mine, and naught but wicked craft
 Ere rent him from my bosom---Oh! my love!
 Oh! my betrothed love, how are we sever'd!
 Curse on the monsters of iniquity,
 Who thus have burst the tenderest bands asunder
 Affection ever knew---*thou* art betray'd!
 Dungeons, and poverty, and shame are thine,
 And everlasting blindness; while I, deserted,
 Roam round the world in search of envy'd *Peace*,
 Who still eludes my grasp---Stript of my friends,
 I suffer all alone, unheard, unheeded.

Arf. Oh! say not so---wrong not *my* humble love;
 Sure I would make thy sufferings all my own;
 And if that might not be, I'd mingle tears
 And answer sighs with sighs, till weary life
 Should quit its feeble hold; when folding thee
 Close in my dying arms, I'd groan my last;
 And then my unchain'd spirit, true in death,
 Won by thy woes, should fleet around thee still.

BELISARIUS.

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Jul. Oh! my big heart is full---a doleful load
Oppresses every nerve---would it could break---
But no! that will not be! it cannot burst
Till BELISARIUS dies; and then, O then!
Lur'd by his gentle call, each aching string
Shall lose its power to feel, and all entranc'd,
My soul shall spring above this world of woe
And join his blameless spirit in the skies:

(Tiberias crosses the stage in haste, she runs towards him.)

My brother, stay---what tidings of your General?

Tib. He is upon his way toward his castle
On foot, and only guided by a child.

[Exit.]

Jul. Arfaces, dost thou love me? *(Returning.)*

Arf. Ah! Julia, canst thou doubt it?

Jul. Then aid me in an enterprise of vengeance;
Haste to Bulgaria, tell thy warlike prince
That Rome's defender is disgrac'd, that now
He wanders tow'rd his place of banishment;
Tell him to be the injured exile's friend,
And yield him the command of half his forces---
Then (if his swelling heart resembles mine)
Soon shall this hated empire be destroy'd---
BYZANTIUM shall be involv'd in smoke---
Shoutings, and cries, and shriekings we shall hear;
The hum of chariots, and the hideous crash
Of falling towers; while the elated victors
Shall plunge their daggers in the boiling bosoms
Of the voluptuous despots---haste! begone!

Arf. Julia.

Jul. Pause not a moment, else thou lose my love;
This deed can but secure it; go, young man,
And soon as this destruction is accomplished,
This glorious destruction! I am thine.

Arf. And wilt thou not retract?

Jul. Not for my life; go! haste and do thy errand!

Arf. Then grant me this, (*kneels and kisses her hand*) an earnest of my bliss,

And smile propitious on my enterprize.

Jul. Go, and may angels guard thee. [*Exit Arf.*]

Now *Love*, thou art my friend, tho' my vex'd mind

Feels not thy happy influence---I love not---

No, I despair; and nothing charms my soul

But deeds of death, and thoughts of deep revenge;

Though the birds chaunt in every rustling copse,

And fountains warbling roll, and scented gales

Blow cool along the shadowy mountain's side,

They yield me no delight---from blissful views

Rancorous I turn away---and, like the spider,

From most salubrious and precious sweets,

I only gather poison. [*Exit.*]

The EMPEROR rises and comes forward.

EMPEROR.

Oh! most unfortunate!---Can this be true?

And have I been deceived?---Is BELISARIUS

My subject once so loyal, still the same?

Oh! is he innocent?---are his hands pure?

I shudder at the thought!---it cannot be---

It *must* not---Heavens! 'twould tarnish all my glories;

The *world* would pour contumely on my name,

Holding me infamous---and future ages

Hear the recital of my acts with horror;

And wonder why the world did not combine

To drown in his own blood so dire a monster.

---Pshaw---'tis all folly---hold---yet let me think---

I'll hear Tiberias tell the whole again;

I'll have him in my chamber, and, oh! then,

If I have wronged that ruined old man,

I'll seek, and weeping, sue him for a pardon:

Then hide my hoary head, and die with shame. [*Exit.*]

ACT THE SECOND.

SCENE---A Garden---a Cottage adjoining it.

Enter GILIMER, with a spade in his hand; AMALA leaning on his arm, (time day-break.)

AMALA.

'TIS yet too soon to labour, love; come sit,
This air blows fresh, and these sweet bending flowers,
Heavy with dew, shed such a fragrance round,
And so melodious sings the early lark,
'T would be a pity not to enjoy the hour:
Come sit upon this sod; (*they sit*) see the morn breaks
In streams of quivering light upon the hills,
And the loose clouds in changeful colours gay,
Now ting'd with *crimson* deep, with *amber* now,
Sail slow along the brightening horizon.

Gil. Yes, my Amala, 'tis a lovely morn,
And might inspire me with calm ideas,
But that my thoughts are dwelling on the stranger
Who claim'd your hospitality last night.
You said he was a soldier, old and poor,
And that excites compassion; for I grieve
To see a *veteran* who hath spent his strength
In the big perils of uncertain war,
Far from his home, his comforts and his friends!
Who oft hath slept upon the frozen earth,
And suffered grievous want; that he, when *age*
Hath made him bald, and chill'd his sickly veins,
And rendered him quite useless to himself,
Should then be turn'd upon the world adrift,
To seek a scanty sustenance from alms;
'Tis much to be lamented.

Enter BELISARIUS, led by a Boy.

AMALA.

See our guest comes; I will retire, my love,
And bid my daughter gather some choice fruits
For his refreshment. *[Goes into the cottage.]*

Boy. This way good Sir. *(To Belisarius)*

Gil. How fares my aged friend?

Bel. Why much refresh'd with the last night's repose.
Is it my *host* that makes this kind demand?

Gil. It is.

Bel. May heaven its blessings pour profusely round him,
For his compassion to the worn-out warrior.

Gil. I reverence the name; but pray be seated---
I, like yourself, have stood the test of battle,
And love to hear again of feats of arms.
Where serv'd you, friend? and in what noisy fight
Did you receive those honourable scars?

Bel. 'Twas in the dubious wars against the *Persians*,
Whose thousands fell upon the plains of *DARA*,
With horrible destruction, while thousands more
Fled from the hasty storms of whistling arrows;
Then where the savage *Goths* o'er captive *Rome*
Spread barbarisms, and lawless blotted out
The vestiges of science, our eager bands
Cast their entrenchments round the hardy foe.

Gil. Fought you in Africa?

Bel. We did, against the *Vandals* and the *Moor*.

Gil. Then you know *BELISARIUS*, that great man!
Does he still live, that pattern for all soldiers?
For here, secluded from the bustling throng,
I seldom hear what passes in the world.

Bel. Yes, he still lives.

Gil. Doubtless the idol of a grateful people,
Mantled in power and guarded by his friends,
Who wait on all his wishes; tir'd of war

He spends his age in honourable ease :
Oh ! what an ornament is he to *man* !
Where find we such abilities as his,
So much experience, such an equal temper,
Such strength of judgment, nobleness of mind,
And amiable valour ?

Bel. You knew him then ?

Gil. Yes, by the chance of battle---as my conqueror ;
He vanquished me, and I revere him still ;
For when a thousand sorrows rose against me,
Adversity became a virtuous master,
And taught me by the sufferings I endur'd
To feel for other men---that to be *humane*
Was to be *great*---NATURE made no reserve,
But all who bore the sacred stamp of *reason*
Might claim one general law.
---You have seen *GILIMER*, the Vandal King,
Brought in a triumph to *BYZANTIUM* ?

Bel. I did see him.

Gil. 'Tis he beneath whose shed you have repos'd.

Bel. Ha ! can it be ! the mighty Vandal King
Who roll'd in *affluence*---is he become
An humble peasant ?

Gil. He is.

Bel. The great, the warlike *Gilimer* !

Gil. Even so.

Bel. Oh, wonderful fortune !

Gil. I am contented with it ; I desire
No higher appellation than I bear ;
Honours were proffer'd me by your old Emperor,
Which I refus'd ; for tir'd indeed was I
Of fluctuating grandeur : hither then
I bore my humbled family of captives,
Where, far retir'd from *Pomp's* fastidious train,
They might in *peace* improve the fertile earth.

And live by industry. My pamper'd sons
Now till my fields, and my accomplish'd girl
Toils with her mother, or attends the sheep,
While GILIMER here labours with his spade.

Bel. Where learn'd you this philosophy?

Gil. Upon the rugged mountains of *Papua*,
In the dark caverns of the treacherous *Moor*,
Whither, from the pursuit of the brave Romans,
I fled with my sad mutilated army.
There *famine* glar'd in every haggard eye,
And *desperation* harden'd every heart;
Noisome *diseases* overran the camp,
While *winter's* rigors numb'd our dwindling limbs;
And when we sought a respite from our griefs
In tranquil slumbers and illusive dreams,
Soon were we ruffled of the golden vision,
Wak'd by the pealing war-trump's dreary blast!

Bel. Ah! such are the calamities of war.

Gil. Rous'd by their woes I cast mine eyes around
Upon the famish'd wretches that I sway'd:
“And who,” I cried, “hath brought you all this misery!”
“Say, is it I? what have I done for you?”
“That thus your lives you offer as a prey”
“To such sad desolation?” Rise, my friends,
“You are my slaves no more---equals in grief.”
“Let us our interests join, and now descend
“As prisoners to the Romans.” They paus'd---they wept,
But not a tongue replied. “Alas!” said I,
“Are you in love with Sorrow, that you thus
“Refuse to be delivered? If 'tis for *me* you feel,
“Banish your cares, for GILIMER is a man,
“And values more the comforts of a nation
“Than his own private weal! Tell me, my friends,
“Is it more glorious *here* to stay and suffer,
“To see our unoffending offspring pine,
“And our sad *comforts* perish on our bosoms,

"Than by a single effort to recall
 "The blessedness of peace? If you have lov'd,
 "If ever you have honour'd GILIMER,
 "Rise and obey him now."

Bel. 'Twas nobly said.

Gil. Weeping they rose,
 And as we slowly march'd toward the plain,
 Calm Reason floated in upon my soul,
 And pointed out the follies of the great,
 The childishness, the emptiness of pomp:
 And as I mus'd upon the mock parade,
 The ceremonious sons of splendor make,
 The scene grew ludicrous: and when your chief
 Thought to have seen my tears, o'erpower'd with mirth
 I burst into immoderate fits of laughter!

Bel. I well indeed remember the strange scene;
 'Twas thought your mighty woes had made you wild.

Gil. Oh, no! till then I had been simple too;
 But when I saw how the mad multitude
 Ran after *Fame*, a *short-liv'd*, capacious being,
 Who praise dispenses to the worthless, and withholds
 From the deserving; how they toil'd, and urg'd,
 And often perish'd in the vain pursuit,
 (Which, if accomplish'd, brought them no repose;)
 Then I grew sick of vanity, and resign'd
 My crown without a sigh; and now declare,
 That as a *peasant* I enjoy more bliss
 Than when a king.

Bel. Happy the man whose steadfast bosom feels
 Unmov'd the rudest shocks of varying Fortune;
 Who, when despoiled of his *gem-deck'd* couch,
 Can slumber sweetly on a *sheaf of straw*.
 ---Yet think not that the barb'd shafts of Misfortune
 Were spent on you alone, sage GILIMER;
 For in the person of an old blind beggar
 You may trace BELISARIUS!

Gil. Ha! did I hear aright---said you-----

Bel. Yes, I said BELISARIUS---I am he.

Gil. Oh, wondrous change! and are you BELISARIUS?
A blind, abandon'd, beggared old man!
He at whose feet the Carthagenians laid
My regal robes---who brought a world of wealth
To the Byzantine court? And is it he
That asks an alms from GILIMER, his captive?

Bel. Yes, 'tis the same! and him the Byzantines
Have banish'd, and depriv'd of both his eyes!

Gil. Horrid barbarity! who did the deed?

Bel. They were the favourites of the Emperor,
And he fast verges toward second childhood.
They prison'd me---and he whom I had serv'd
With so much zeal did pass the sad decree!
---When I first heard it my full heart beat slow---
My wonted fortitude forsook me---and when I thought
That 'twas JUSTINIAN that urg'd the blow,
(Casting my hopeless eyes to yon bright heaven,
As 'twere to take a lasting leave of light)
I wrung my hands, and bath'd me in my tears.
---The executioner, touch'd with my sorrows,
Sunk on the ground, and cried, "You are undone!
" Wretched old man! why does your heart not break
" And give you a release from such a woe!"
But it is past, and tranquil as the flood,
When gently kiss'd by Twilight's softest gale,
My spirits rest, and scarce consent to weep,
When Memory would the piteous tale recall.

Gil. Stay with me, sufferer! end thy wanderings here!
Beneath my roof let Death perform his office!

Bel. It cannot be! a mournful family
Expect me daily---though, alas! they think not
How wretched I shall come. Farewell, my friend,
May comforts crown your days. Let me embrace you.

[*They embrace---the boy leads Belisarius away---Gilimer
covers his face with his hands and retires into the cottage*

SCENE--An elegant apartment.

Tables spread with fruits, wines, &c. Bessus and several Courtiers sitting round---Servants.

BESSUS.

Come fill your goblets high---salute the day
With festive mirth, and banish every grief;
For know, to-day triumphant Innocence
Gains her reward, and bloody Infamy
Draws down upon her own polluted soul
The ruin she had fram'd for others. Come, drink.

All. To Bessus' health. (They drink.)

1st Court. Aye, right! for while he lives his open heart
Shall pour profusely on his grateful friends
The choicest gifts of Affluence: you do right
To wish him health who is so bountiful.

2^d Court. Come give me music, and I'll strain my voice
To utter the hot feelings of my soul
On such a day as this. Fill me more wine!
May swift destruction seize on Bessus' foes! (Drinks.)

Bess. You are too warm, my dear, my generous friends!
I own the jealous BELISARIUS wrong'd,
And would, perhaps, have ruin'd me completely,
Had not the POWER that weighs our every act
Repell'd the burning shaft. But I forgive,
And wish him no more evil, tho' I joy
For Virtue's sake, that this hath come upon him.
---But I prevent your song---I pray go on.

S O N G

As when Old Ocean, fraught with tempest roars,
And stormy gales howl the dark shores along,
And swelling foam smokes the arch'd caves among,
And on the rough rocks dash the thundering waves;

BELISARIUS.

The rocks repel the force---the waves retreat,
Spent with the idle war, and seek the main;
Then loud the rushing north winds blow, and beat
Back to the shore the surging waves again.

Thus, tho' with dark insidious aim
Fell *Envy* threw a deadly dart
To fally *Bessus*' spotless fame,
And wound his generous, feeling heart;
Avenging HEAV'N beheld the deed,
And bidding angry thunders roll,
Hurl'd back the shaft with horrid speed,
To blast the wretch's cruel soul.

Bess. Thanks, thanks, my friends! I feel your generous
love,
And only ask how I shall e'er repay it?

Enter a SERVANT.

SERVANT.

A stranger asks admittance.

Bess. Let him enter. *[Exit servant.]*

Enter a BULGARIAN.

BESSUS.

Welcome, my friend; what would you?

Bulg. I come to give you joy of *BELISARIUS*!

1st Court. Come you from *Byzantium*?

Bulg. I do.

2d Court. Saw you the prisoner freed?

Bulg. I did, and quite alarming was the scene.

3d Court. How so?

Bulg. Some of the old disbanded regiments,
Who oft had sent petitions to the throne
In his behalf, receiving no return

Grew quite outrageous, and, with din of arms,
 Rush'd on toward his dungeon, fully bent
 To give their General liberty by force;
 And the misguided citizens united
 Their clamours with the soldiery. Dire confusion
 Now spread throughout the city; armed bands
 Attempted to disperse the madd'ning croud,
 Who, quite infuriate, threatened sure destruction
 On all that dar'd oppose them. To the palace
 Expresses drove with speed, and THEODORA,
 Seeing the EMPEROR work'd up to a phrenzy,
 Seiz'd the glad moment, and gave instant orders
 For the enlargement of the prisoner.

Bess. And is it possible she gave such orders?

Bulg. She did, and gave these dread directions with them:
 "Wrench out his eyes, lest, prompted by revenge,
 "He should again aspire to royalty,
 "And raise a mutiny among the slaves."
 They hasted to the prison, and with speed
 Perform'd the dread command; then led him forth,
 Bending from his harsh chains. He scarce appear'd
 Ere one sad shriek burst from the frantic host
 And shook the atmosphere: tumultuous groans
 And drowning tears succeeded, and these were lost
 In curses dire on the barbarian's head
 Who fram'd the hellish deed.

2d Court. But what said he?

Bulg. To the blue sky he rais'd his sightless eyes
 (That never more should drink its crystal lustre,)
 And wav'd his withered hand, demanding silence:
 A solemn pause ensued--each sound suspended,
 And every murmur or impassion'd sigh
 Breathless attention awfully suppress'd.
 ---Touch'd with this mournful tribute of respect
 His rising sobs impeded utterance,
 Till by one effort he o'ercame his griefs,
 And spake---"My brethren, my afflicted fellows,

" Let not your *love* deprive me of the bliss
 " My *enemies* have left me--make me not
 " The guilty cause of a sad insurrection;
 " Murder and blood will not restore my fight,
 " Nor add one hour to my exhausted life;
 " Whate'er is left me is my innocence!

3d Court. And did this *sophistry* quell the fierce riot?

Bulg. Oh, yes! the attentive, melting populace
 Embrac'd his knees, and wept upon his garments,
 And in the vehemence of their affection
 Tender'd him all they own'd--" No," he replied,
 " Treasures may comfort you--*me* they cannot;
 " My relish for them is long since decay'd;
 " Keep them, and be you bless'd--I only ask
 " One of your little ones, to be my guide
 " To ANTONINA's castle."

1st Court. What a strange man!

Bess. Aye! strange indeed; that in this heavy age
 He still retains his wicked subtilty,
 To win the people and delude JUSTINIAN!
 He knows the channel to his Sovereign's heart
 Is flattery, and therefore, thus afflicted,
 He means to soften, with endearing words,
 The sottish mob, and make them weep and wail him.
 Oh! would they tender him a crown again,
 Even in his desolate, decriped age,
 His feeble hand would grasp the glittering bauble
 And he commence a tyrant!

Bulg. Not so! your General never was ambitious;
 He sought his country's welfare, not its riches.
 Did not the *Vandals* offer him the rule
 Of conquer'd *Carthage*, and its mighty spoils?

Bess. And did he not accept it? Did he not,
 Garb'd like a fool, sit on the Vandal throne,
 And act as King? Did ever GILIMER
 Display more splendor at his solemn feasts

Than BELISARIUS at a common meal;
Serv'd by the Lords and Princes of the city,
Who bore the gold and crystal goblets round?
And when in Italy, did he not aspire
To wear the diadem of the Gothic King?

Bulg. And what prevented him? was it the people?
Or was it his unblemish'd fealty
To his ungrateful Emperor?

Bess. The apprehensions of JUSTINIAN's fury
Prevented him; for very well he knew,
That had he deviated from his duty,
The union'd vengeance of Byzantium's nobles
Had burst upon him like a thunder storm,
And blasted him forever.

Bulg. Oh fallacy! and was it e'er suppos'd
That sons of impotence, wallowing in luxury,
Disabled by their vices, even to mount
Their cushion'd chariots without assistance,
That *these* would ever dare to meet the man
Inur'd to hardships, and grown grey in war?
Would he whose valour charm'd the wondering world,
Fear such a host of courtly invalids,
With an old biggot Emperor at their head,
Bidding his beads, and praying to his saints?
Oh! the extreme of folly!

2d Court. Dastardly wretch! dare you thus ridicule
Our holy Sovereign and his piety?
Take that for your reward! (*Attempts to stab him.*)

(*The Bulgarian runs to the door.*)
Bulg. What, ho! Bulgarians! my companions, ho! *W*
Bulgarian soldiers rush in. They fight and overcome the courtiers.

LEADER.

Ha, monsters! is this revelling and riot
Because a good man suffers shamefully,
While you, whose lives have been a round of villanies,

D

Whose crimes pollute the mighty Roman name,
Retire in peace to enjoy your countless stores,
Obtain'd by ruthless rapine and extortion.

2d Bulg. Which of all these is Bessus?

1st Court. He with the purple mantle.

2d Bulg. Say, shall I slay him?

Leader. That would be no revenge; call BELISARIUS,
And let his hand, while yet his strength remains,
Guide this broad sabre to the traitor's heart.

Bess. Oh! spare my life, take all I have beside,
My gold, my castle, and my hosts of slaves;
Take them, and make a sacrifice of all,
I only ask my life.

Enter Soldiers with BELISARIUS.

BELISARIUS.

Nay, my good friends, this is indeed unkind
Thus to make me the author of a riot;
Let me return, I do not want revenge.

1st Bulg. No, but we do; come, here is Bessus, strike him.

Bess. Oh, BELISARIUS! 'tis you I see,
Thus kneeling do I crave your clemency; *(Kneels.)*
You are too good---too kind, to see me suffer.

2d Court. And my dear General, was I not your friend?
Oh! think how oft you blest me with your council!

Leader. And how thou hast abus'd his proffer'd friendship;
No! thou shalt die, for vengeance, soon or late,
Will overtake such blood-hounds as thou art.

Bel. Nay, give them time, good soldiers, to repent;
Cut them not off in such an evil day,
For they are fill'd with wine. Oh! spare their lives.

2d Bulg. No, they're a stain upon the book of nature;
They thirst for blood, and they shall have their fill:
Men, lead them off. *(The soldiers lead away the courtiers.)*

Bess. Oh, mercy!

2d Bulg. Peace, fool; die quietly. (Stabs him.)

Bel. Oh! my good friends, you wound me to the quick,
Thus to deprive my countrymen of life;
Truly it grieves me, and the world will fix
Upon my name the stigma of this act.

1st Bulg. And have they not long since deserv'd this fate?

2d Bulg. They have, for they were ravenous and cruel;
I have known *Bessus*, in a time of dearth;
(Of which he was the merciless occasion)
Monopolizing all Byzantium's bread,
And vending it at an enormous rate;
Nor noticed the deep wailings of the poor,
Who, mad with want, and hopeless of relief,
Lifted their famished children to his eyes
And offered them for food.

Leader. Most horrible! and grievest thou for such men?
Where'er I find them they shall meet destruction!

Bel. Ah! not while I am with you, rather slay me;
Such outrage ill befits my drooping age.

Leader. Well, be compos'd, we will restrain ourselves.
Here, slaves, remove this body, and prepare
A chamber where we may refresh ourselves.
Come General, let me lead thee. [Exit]

ACT THE THIRD.

SCENE---The Tent of the Prince of Bulgaria.

The PRINCE and MATHON;

PRINCE.

BORNE on the broad wings of swift flighted Time,
Full many a variant moon hath past away,
Since first bedizen'd with these robes of state
I held the sceptre in Bulgaria's court.

Bright was that day---it was in early spring,
 And smiling Nature was profuse in kindness;
 The cattle low'd upon the misty hills,
 And the gay birds pour'd forth their mellow tunes;
 As 'twere to chide the tardiness of *morn*,
 And wake the slumbering clarion---all did bode
 A reign of peace to him that should be crown'd:
 But, ah! since then I have been undeceiv'd,
 And WAR's fell breath hath blighted all my hopes:
 Riot, sedition, broils internal, craft,
 And fierce invasions have obscur'd my sun,
 Tearing away each flowery pride of youth;
 And now, when sinking in Life's cloudy dell,
 The mingled storm assails my frightened heart,
 Threatening a sure destruction to this realm.

Math. Have we then no resource? Are we such cowards,
 That, all disheart'ned, we should yield the palm
 To those who but demand it? No; if they come,
 Our brave and hardy *hosts*, with giant strength,
 Will hurl their steady spears, in glittering storms,
 Upon the daring foe, even if we perish.

Prince. I know your bravery; but 'tis not strength
 That always overcomes---cautious cunning
 Often does more---'tis necessary then
 That leaders should, as well as *brave*, be wily;
 Such was the Roman General BELISARIUS.

Math. Alas! poor man, how lowly is he fallen!

Prince. Yet he may rise to wear his master's crown.

Math. How?

Prince. I've chosen him chief of all Bulgaria's forces.

Math. Thou hast!

Prince. I have; and see, the august soldier comes
 To thank and bless me for my unsought kindness.

Enter BELISARIUS, led by a Soldier.

PRINCE.

Welcome, my friend, to this our favour'd region; blest

Once had I frown'd upon thy presence here;
My victor or my captive—but 'tis past,
And now I press thee thus upon my bosom,
And greet thee as my brother.

Bel. I deeply feel your generosity,
And was, as I was in former days,
Would ask you in what way I might repay it;
But honest *Truth* her tablets reads aloud,
And tells me I have nothing to bestow.

Prince. Not so, my friend; know'st thou thine errand here
Is to become the General of my troops?
Thou hast been ruined by the vile *Justinian*,
Still more thy foe than mine; now thou may'st go
And overthrow Byzantium's boasted bulwarks,
Prison the hideous wretch who prison'd thee,
And take thy fill of vengeance—Is it not right?

Bel. You know me not, kind prince, if you suppose
Revenge can yield me pleasure: I am old,
And kindness soothes my spirits: Peace I love,
But dread commotion wings my heart's best nerve,
And makes me forward look, with anxious eyes,
To that blest moment when the lonely grave
Shall mantle me in silence.

Prince. Ha! hath oppression enervated thee?
Doth that firm spirit, once so fierce in war,
Shrink from the tumult of the glorious onset?
And did the hand that quench'd thine eyes' gay lustre
Darken the SUN-LIKE optics of thy soul?
Rouse, warrior, rouse! Rome's empire shall be thine;
And ere the uplifted blow tremendous falls
Upon the sanguinary monster's heart,
He shall be told, 'tis thy bold hand arrests him.

(*Flourish of trumpets, &c. heard without.*)

Bel. And can you foster in your arms the man,
Who, all-forgetful of the laws of nature,
Boiling with wrath vindictive, bars his dart,
And wets it in the bosom of his country?

Can you confide in him? Do you expect
 A ray of *gratitude* will light his soul
 For all your favours---when each *atom spark*
 That glimmer'd for the *realm*, that gave him life,
 A sense of injury hath quite extinguish'd?
 Trust me, good Sir, your love I should not merit
 If I were capable of such a deed.
Unshaken fealty toward his sovereign
 Is the best virtue Belisarius owns.

Math. And dost thou then reject our princely offers?

Bel. How can my troth accept them? Shall I now
 Sully the glories of a long life's toil,
 And justify the cruelty of my foes?
 Nor think to dazzle me with *Splendor's* name;
 Even in my *youth* (*Ambition's* darling season)
Carthage unfolded all her warlike gates,
 Tendering me her sceptre; and *Itaria*,
 Opprest, and discontented with her King,
 Bade me supply his place; but I refus'd,
 And even though *Persecution's* horrid crest
 Was rear'd already full upon my view,
Unstain'd allegiance had more charms for me
 Than *regal* power could yield. Still in my breast
 That sworn *allegiance* dwells, and must forever.
 Had e'er *JUSTINIAN* stretch'd a lawless arm
 To infringe the rightful liberties of my country,
 Then had I quick unsheath'd a vengeful sword,
 And flown to crush the *despot* and his minions;
 But as 'tis *me* alone whom he hath injur'd,
 My private wrongs shall never wake mine ire
 To whelm a mighty city in destruction,
 Even if I could atchieve it.

Prince. And can't thou not?

Bel. It would be difficult---The *Byzantines*
 Are skill'd in warlike arts, and their brave chiefs,
NARSUS and *MUNDUS*, *HERMES*, *SALOMON*,

With their accoutred legions, might defy
The world equipt for battle.

(Flourish of martial instruments heard again.)

What mean those martial sounds?

Math. Bulgaria's sons, rejoic'd at thine arrival,
Salute thee with such strains to animate thee,
And wake in thee the memory of past scenes,
When thy proud steed, champing his golden bit,
Bore thee o'er heaps of slaughter'd enemies;
While vanquish'd thousands at thy presence knelt,
And kiss'd the dust o'er which the conqueror rode.
Such are the thoughts that warm the warrior's bosom;
Such the loud music that the soldier loves.

Bel. Yes, when the battle burns, and *maniac Rage*
Bites the hot earth, and like a *dæmon* roars,
While clouds of dust inshrou'd his starting eyes,
And streams of blood spout from his mangled limbs,
Oh! then, amid the horror, sonorous notes,
Peal'd from an hundred brazen mouths at once,
Drown the deep groans of those who dying fall,
And bear their cries, on Clamour's wings, to heaven:
But music, such as lulls my wayward cares,
Is often heard within the peasant's hamlet.
What time grey Twilight veils the eastern sky,
When the blight maiden carols rustic songs,
To soothe the infirmities of peevish Age,
Or (when the moon shines on the dew-gem'd plain)
Attunes her voice to chaunt some lightsome air
For those who dance upon the tufted green.
Such are the strains I love, and such as float
On the cool gale from a far mountain's side,
Where some lone *shepherd* fills his simple pipe,
Calling the *echoes* from their dewy beds,
To chase mute sleep away. Ah! bless'd is he
If his choice melody be ne'er disturb'd
By the death-breathing trumpet's woeful tone.

Prince. If thou wert ever thus averse to war,

General, why did'st thou fight?

Bel. To purchase peace, not to extend dominion.
Peace was the crown of conquest. He who fought
And screen'd his country from the invading foe,
Returning, sheath'd his sword, and reap'd his grain,
Eating his fruits in safety and content;
Nor wip'd his shield, nor burnish'd his spear,
Till outrage call'd him to the field again—
Such is the triumph of humanity!

Math. And art thou still resolv'd to serve the Emperor?
Cannot his savage deeds make thee detest him?

Bel. Ah! no; I hate him not—I pity him,
That when he most does need true-hearted friends
He should have fewest—that designing men
Should gain his credulous love, and bribe his will
With flatteries unheard of, moulding him
To their own wicked purpose—poor deceiv'd!

Prince. What, though I am JUSTINIAN'S bitterest foe,
Yet, BELISARIUS, I am thy friend,
And pray thee, e'er thou journeyest tow'rd thy home,
To take these gems, 'tis Friendship's hand bestows them.

(Places a casket in the hands of Belisarius.)

Bel. As Friendship's boon, the gems I would receive,
If I might use them; but his country's spoils
Must ne'er adorn the robes of Belisarius. *(Returning it.)*

Prince. Take then this wreath; hero, it is thy due,
(Takes a tiara of laurel entwined with gold, from his own head, and places it upon that of Belisarius.)

Frail emblem of thy glory: yet as this
Holds in contempt all earth's gay, transient flowers;
So shall thy fame shine to succeeding ages,
When mine is buried with me in the dust,
And all my rival princes sleep forgotten.
Yet, if the world shall ask who crown'd thee thus,
Say 'twas a mortal enemy of Rome;
Who, while he fought to gain her richest treasure,
Rever'd the virtue he could not subdue.

Math. Hast thou a wife?

Bel. I had when erst confin'd---whether she lives
I know not; perhaps the storm of sorrow
That blew so fiercely on my tender *lily*,
Hath crush'd its fragile form, and now it droops
Forlorn and unsupported. A daughter fair,
Alone was left my exil'd ANTONINA,
And she, perchance, sinks too beneath the weight
Of complicated woes---those woes to soften
Was my best wish, when from my dungeon's portals
I grop'd my way, and every feeble step
That brought me nearer my neglected mansion
Gave to my withered cheek a grateful glow,
And bade my pulse beat quicker: the dear thought
That I might cheer with philosophic virtue
The hearts so long devoted to distress,
Lent to my limbs new vigor---and ere now
(Had not your gallant bands arrested me)
I might have wip'd off many an anxious tear,
And dried the source whence they too freely flow'd.

Prince. I grieve that such consoling meditations
My mandate should have clouded: but, my friend,
Thou shalt not be detain'd---Yet, stay one hour,
And some refreshment take, for thy weak frame,
Exhausted by the travel of this morn,
Demands a short repose. We will retire. [Exeunt.]

SCENE---The Palace Hall of Justinian.

Enter THEODORA.

THEODORA.

Things go on well; my ancient prying foe
Is now dismiss'd, with all his cares of state,
And now may ruminate in solitude
How oft he thwarted me in my designs,
While he his own accomplished. Had he done

E

As other courtiers, *honour'd* and *obey'd*,
 He had been *General* still; but he was proud;
 And still oppos'd, or slighted my bequests,
 Till he work'd up my anger to a storm,
 And fram'd his own destruction.
 And yet, methinks I do not feel reveng'd,
 While he in haughty stubbornness of soul
 Looks on his punishment with cool contempt,
 Or rather, an *indifference* that shocks me.
 Can I believe, that, stript of courtly honour,
 Blinded, and sunk in abject poverty,
 Cast in a dungeon, cumbered there with fetters,
 He should be happy still? It cannot be;
 'Tis all hypocrisy---a base invention;
 The last resource of mortified *ambition*,
 That still would lift itself above the crowd
 For the fool world to gaze at.

Enter BARSAMES.

What news Barsames?

Barf. None, Madam, save that *JULIA* is return'd.

From the Bulgarian court.

Theo. What says she of her hero?

Barf. Storms and rages---sometimes she sits and weeps,
 Calls herself *fool*, and says she will forget him;
 Then, starting in the wildness of despair,
 Tears off her locks and casts them to the winds;
 And in the horrid phrenzy of her soul,
 With broken speech, utters such imprecations
 As makes one's blood grow chilly.

Theo. Whom does she curse?

Barf. Dreadful to tell; your majesty and the *EMPEROR*.

Theo. Base, vile, rebellious wretch! are these the thanks
 For all my sisterly attentions to her?
 Did I not take her from obscurity,
 A poor illiterate orphan, train her up
 As an own child, and loaded her with honours?

And yet, because I sent her from BYZANTIUM,
To shield her from the ruin I saw would fall
And crush the traitor, now she curses me.
Were it not for TIBERIAS, her brother,
This night my dungeon's heaviest iron doors
Should close on her forever. (*Makes a long pause.*)

Barfames, have you seen the cells to-day?

Barf. I have, and saw the stubborn EUCHUS die.

Theo. Ha! Made he no confession?

Barf. None, for, soon as they brought him to the torture,
He call'd on HEAVEN, and swore an awful oath,
That neither scourge, nor fiercest fires, nor racks,
Should e'er compel him to disturb the silence
That then should seal his lips.

They tortur'd him, and though his pangs were keen,
His heart disdain'd to utter even a groan:

But as his life began to lose its hold,

Sinking upon the *skeleton* of his father,

He kiss'd the bones, and laying his scorch'd hand

Upon his shrivell'd mouth, look'd up, and died.

Theo. Then have I lost all hopes of a discovery.

Oh! this conspiracy, how it gnaws my bosom!

Euchus I stole from out a dismal prison;

I singled him from all the rest, and life,

With riches, honours, and my choicest gifts,

I proffer'd him, but proffer'd all in vain.

Barf. Are they all dead?

Theo. None of the band remain save the vile head,

And he perhaps secure drinks of my cup,

And saunters unmolested in my chamber.

Did you see Phædrus?

Barf. Yes; but he did not know me:

He sat upon a heap of mouldering bones,

With his shrunk hands, thus, folded on his breast,

And his sunk eyes were fix'd upon the ground

Half shut, and o'er his bosom stream'd his beard,

Hoary and long. I twice accosted him

Ere he regarded me; then looking up,
He eyed me with a vague and senseless gaze,
And heaving a most lamentable sigh,
Drop'd his pale face upon his breast again.

Theo. I'll go myself this moment and give orders
For his removal to some cheerful place,
Where kind attendance, and my best physician,
May woo his scattered senses back again;
For *thus insane* he loses sense of woe.
This *MANIA* is a balm, a sovereign cure
For all the ills that fester in the heart;
It sets the warring passions all asleep,
Blotting out good and evil---'tis peace---'tis bliss,
And *that* my vengeance meant not to bestow:
I meant him *anguish* and *eternal pangs*;
But this the mad feel not---therefore, when life,
Fraught with rich vigor, through his arteries rolls,
And reason rises cloudless in his brain,
Embracing courteous hope, then will I go
And break the vain enchantment: galling chains
Shall load his shivering limbs, and shocking curses
Pursue him to his lurid den again.
This will be sweet revenge---there let him try
If the bright wit that jeer'd a woman's *foibles*
Will light the dungeon where her *fury* dwells. [*Exit hastily.*]

BARSAMES solus, (after a long pause.)

Barf. Dwells there beneath thine arch immense, O sky!
Another heart so stain'd with shameful crimes?
Black as the caverns where her victims suffer---
Devil incarnate, scourge of this wide empire---
Her's is the task to plan deep cruelties,
Horrid as hell! and *mine* to execute them;
Nightly to wander, thief-like, through the streets,
And bid my sabre drink the bosom's blood
Of him she deems offending;
Or basely lurking in some fated mansion,

To watch till Midnight's soporific bands
 Have lull'd the willing world in sweet repose,
 Then rushing like a tiger from his den,
 To burst where the devoted victim sleeps,
 And tear him from his frightened consort's arms,
 Who faintly screams and swoons, while he, aghast,
 Claps her cold body in a dumb embrace,
 And looks a last adieu. Most horrible!
 This is *my* mission---Oh! my heart revolts
 From the infernal ministry---blood---blood!
 Yet soft---thou dust, and ye encircling walls
 Hear not these overflowings of my soul,
 Lest they transpire, and I this awful night
 Groan in the prison with those whose fate I mourn. [*Exit.*]

Enter TIBERIAS and JULIA.

JULIA.

Begone---I say begone! let me alone,
 I am no child---I will not be controul'd---
 I tell thee I will see her.

Tib. Nay, but the Emperor-----

Jul. The Emperor! who cares? what of him pray?
 Think'st thou I fear to whisper in his ear,
 Or tell the Empress of her faults before him?
 Or think'st thou that I *love* his Majesty,
 That thus his name is offered as a charm?

Tib. But hear me sister-----

Jul. I swear TIBERIAS, though thou art my brother,
 If still thou thwart'st my bosom's fix'd design,
 I'll plunge this dagger to thy very soul.
 This instant quit thy hold!

Tib. A dagger---ha! no, then you shall not go.

Jul. Help! murder! help!

Enter the EMPEROR, THEODORA, BARSAMES, and others.

THEODORA.

Who dares make this outcry so near my chamber?

Jul. I made it, Madam, for I wish'd to enter,
And this, my lordly brother, did prevent me;
He hath learn'd tyranny within these walls,
A goodly school I tro.

Tib. Madam, a mania hath possess'd her brain;
I pray you heed her not. *(Kneels.)*

Theo. Rise, gentle youth, I-----

Jul. No, 'tis no mania that directs my tongue;
It is proud *Reason*, who, defying danger,
Dares lift her angel voice, and trumpet forth
The cruelties of power---yes, and dares tell
How easy Emperors, hoodwink'd by their minions,
Stab their best friends, and clasp polluted *Ruin*
To their own bosoms.

Tib. My sister, let me lead you to your chamber.

Jul. Avaunt, nor till I've told the hideous tale
That weeping *Truth* pour'd in my startled ear,
Think to decoy me hence. Thou, JUSTINIAN,
Hast from my heart torn every bleeding nerve
Sacred to love or pity. The stern mandate
That bore me mad from my deluded lover,
Stamp'd on its seal the horrors of my fate,
And doom'd me to a life of ceaseless woe.
And thou, vile woman, impious THEODORA,
Who dar'd to break the ligaments of affection,
What though thou now mayest steep thine hands in blood,
Yet think, oh! think, remorseless, fiend-like woman,
The day of retribution is at hand.

Theo. Guards, lead her off---Tiberias, go with her.

Jul. Off, monsters off! *(They take her off, Tib. follows.)*

[Exit Theodora and attendants another way.]

JUSTINIAN *solus*, (*after a long pause.*)

Emp. Is such the lot of rulers? are they all
Subject to such deceptions? must they all
Be sad accessaries to their people's sorrows?
If so, how hard their fate! sure happier they
On whom Fate hath in kindly mood bestow'd
The blessings of retir'd tranquility;
Whose hearts, untortured by Ambition's blaze,
Glow with the flame, so pure, of doing good.

Re-enter TIBERIAS.

Well, my young friend, what tidings?

Tib. My liege, I have obey'd your good commands.

Emp. And you have seen old BELISARIUS then?

Tib. I have, my liege; I saw him at the castle,
Where I arriv'd before him, and was witness
To a pathetic scene.

Emp. How did poor ANTONINA bear the shock?

Tib. Most sadly; when I enter'd first the chamber
A feverish paleness o'er her aspect gleam'd,
And leaning languidly upon her pillow,
She scarcely did regard me; but as soon
As BELISARIUS' name fell from my lips,
A beam of life shot from her brightening eyes,
And o'er her pallid cheeks exulting Hope,
With liberal hand, suffus'd purpureal beauty.
But when her sight glanc'd on his alter'd visage,
With violent fury springing from her bed,
She shriek'd so awfully, and form'd such curses,
As thook my soul with horror; then she wept,
And strain'd her husband to her beating bosom,
And pitied him awhile---then rag'd again,
And tore her hair, and mangled her poor flesh,
Till wasted quite with the tremendous combat,
She sunk upon her consort's breast, and died.

Emp. Alas! alas!

Tib. Mov'd even to tears I grasp'd and kiss'd his hand,
Then silent led him to a distant chamber,
Where, after the first hour of bitter grief
Was pass'd, I ventur'd to announce my errand;
I told him that I was his nearest neighbour,
And as he was now helpless and alone,
I pray'd him to accept of my abode,
Tendering him my friendliest offices;
All which he did reject, yet not from pride,
But from a modest fear lest his appearance
Should provoke men to scan his Sovereign's deeds.

"Retirement (said he) best does suit mine age,

"Where quiet Contemplation may preside

"O'er every leisure hour: yet, young man,

"If you can listen to the tales of age,

"Come, often to this castle.--I love youth--

"Its motives are as pure as HEAVEN's æther

"Ere yet 'tis tainted by the world's fell breath

"Here we will sit and sweet converse of virtue,

"And I will be your tutor." I consented,

And told him I would bring my hoary father

To witness our next interview.

Emp. But said he, nought of me?

Tib. Oh! yes he did, and tender were his words;

Mild as the gentlest dews that fall from HEAVEN;

Nor did he name the ills that had befallen him,

Save in the calmest voice of *Resignation*.

But, Sire, whene'er he spake of you, his terms

Seem'd all dictated by the warmest love:

Ah! sure they were sincere, for never man

Could feign such kind expressions.

Emp. And did he not reproach me?

Tib. No, my liege;

But he bewail'd you as a mother fond

Would wail an only child.

Emp. Oh! we will hasten to his happy mansion,

Where the rude passions know not to command;

Where mild *Content* and dreaded *Poverty*
Have form'd an envied union---where no swoln sigh,
Rising in sad appeal toward yon HEAVEN,
Brings down upon its author weighty curses:---
But every breath is calm, and every breath
Wafts upward prayers sincere for the old man,
While angels croud around his silvery head,
And screen him from the cares that shorten life.
Ah! me, our different lot!

Tib. Sire, you seem mov'd.

Emp. I am indeed, *TIBERIAS*. I will go
And steal his dying blessing; then on my knees
Implore forgiveness for the wrongs I've done him,
And tell him who I am; say I am he
Who blinded him---who robb'd him of the light---
Who sent him home in poverty and shame---
Who widow'd him, and left him but one reed,
One slender reed, to rest his age upon,
And bear his numerous griefs. Oh! he will weep
To feel an humbled Emperor at his feet.

Enter a SERVANT running.

SERVANT.

Oh! royal Sir---

Emp. What means this frightened haste?

Serv. The beauteous lady *JULIA*---

Tib. What of her?

Serv. Is dead!

Tib. Dead?

Serv. Yes, my Lord; you scarce had left her chamber
Ere she was seiz'd with horrible convulsions:
She spake not, but she groan'd, and her heart beat
So fierce, that from her mouth and streaming eyes
Blood gush'd abundantly, and so she died.

Tib. Oh! my ill-fated sister.

[*Exeunt.*]

BELISARIUS.

ACT THE FOURTH.

SCENE---A Sepulchre.

*Enter men with a bier covered with white, and ornamented with flowers---several ladies follow with baskets of flowers---
BELISARIUS supported by EUDOKA and TIBERIAS---
the men set the bier down.*

BELISARIUS.

LEAD me I pray, my children, to the corse. *(He kneels by it.)*
Thus though I kiss thee, senseless clod of clay,
And Nature draws a few warm sighs upon thee,
Sighs of regret that thus thou art forsaken,
Yet do I hail the fainted essence freed.
-----Spirit, I greet thee,
Whether thou art involv'd in robes of light,
And sit'st enthron'd among the choirs of Heaven;
Or whether destin'd to some Eden star,
Thou there shin'st peerless in thy bright abode;
Or whether still (maternal cares invading)
Thou hoverest o'er the bosom of thy child,
Chasing away the big drops as they rise,
Instilling peace, her guardian angel thou---
Oh! I congratulate thy charm'd escape,
Nor wish thee back again; no, my love,
Thou never shalt return to me; but I,
Whose sun is almost down, shall go to thee.
Then, ANTONINA, when my wilder'd soul
Shall struggle on the borders of eternity,
Come thou with smiles, and songs divine, to meet me
And guide me to my destin'd place of rest. *(Rises.)*
Tib. Permit me, honour'd Sir, to lead you hence,
You are too much affected. *(Leads Belisarius away.)*
*(The men place the corse in the sepulchre---Eudoxa kneels---the
women walk round it and sing---the men retire.)*

SOLEMN MUSIC.

BIRGE.

Flower of beauty, ah! how soon
Woe hath rob'd thee of thy bloom;
 Ere thy sun had gain'd its noon
 Thou hast found the dreary tomb.

Bud of youth, how chang'd art thou!
 All the flush thy cheek that grac'd,
 All the charms that deck'd thy brow,
Death's rude pencil hath defac'd.

Those eyes that rivalled *Phosphor's* light
 Are shrouded in perpetual night;
 Thy lip hath lost its ruby glow;---
 Oh! bud of youth, how chang'd art thou!

Thou who wert wont with active mind,
 To bathe thee in the morning's wave,
 Or climb the mount, art now confin'd
 Within the dark, the chilly grave.

Yet tho' thy cell be dark, O grave!
 And chill the damps that round thee rise,
 Sure thou from *pain* this form wilt save,
 And shut out *sorrow* from these eyes.

Then be our *blissoms* round thee shed,
 The sleep of death to *her* is sweet,
 With *life* its lingering ills retreat,
 No cares afflict the happy dead.

(*They scatter their flowers over the tomb---Eudoxa rises and
 bends over it.*)

Eud. Yes, thou indeed art gone; the sleep of *death*
 Sits heavy on thy lids---ah! shut forever---
 Nor *Tempest's* rage, nor *Trumpet's* vengeful blast,

Nor *Thunder's* roar, shall break the awful slumber;
Nor mournful *figh*, nor agonizing *groan*,
Steal thro' the portals of the *death-clos'd* ear.

1st Lady. Eudoxa, cease to weep;
Sorrow indulg'd makes inroads on the heart
Which all the power of medicine cannot heal;
It drinks up cheerfulness, the balm of life,
Turning, alas! each wonted sweet to gall:
Makes youth grow grey, and ere we know to live
Sends us, sad victims, to the greedy grave.

2d Lady. Oh! pity BELISARIUS, your fond sire;
Let not the hasty drops that dew your cheeks
Fall on his aged breast---surely his heart
Hath woes enough already of its own
To make it burst its fragile bands away.
Add not your griefs to his, lest one sad stroke
Leave you an orphan in this dangerous world.

Eud. Oh! hear with me, my kindly pitying friends;
I must give vent to this big flood of woe,
Or my sad heart will burst---Yet, oh! think not
That e'er I mean to grieve my aged sire!
This tribute paid to ANTONINA's shade,
I haste to him, and all my future hours
Shall be devoted to him; and perhaps
My cares may make him half forget his own,
And lead him gently down the hill of life,
Soothing the rugged path with many a song. [Exeunt.

SCENE---*The Ruins of a Portico belonging to the Castle of
Belisarius---a Garden.*

Enter BELISARIUS and EUDOKA.

BELISARIUS (*sitting down.*)

And do you still, my dear, my sorrowing daughter,
Afflict your heart with unavailing griefs?
Have you not wept enough? or can your tears
Recall to life the inmate of the tomb?

Oh! wherefore should you pine? Your darling mother,
 Freed from the cares, the pains, the ills of earth,
 Dwells in the regions of immortal peace,
 And looks with pity on her hapless friends
 Who here are wedded to *distress* for life.

Eud. Ah me! I know the folly of my tears,
 And yet cannot restrain them. Oh, my father!
 On *me* alone had Fortune pour'd her rage,
 I could have borne the mighty shock unmov'd;
 But when I saw my poor afflicted mother
 Sink, with the bitter anguish of despair---
 Saw her breast heave with fierce contortive pangs---
 Saw life, exhausted, from her lips retire---
 Saw her expire within your feeble arms---
 What! could my heart but break?
 And you, my father, *all* that *Fate* hath left me,
 Can I behold without emotions keen
 That dear adored visage so defac'd
 By ruffian hands impure?

Bel. Cease these regrets, my child; uncourteous *Age*
 Ere long had spread upon my weakening eyes
 A film, obscure and lasting; worse than this
 Mine enemies have not done; and the loss
 Of fortune and her dignities, 'tis worth
 Not even a careful thought; we have enough
 To yield us all Life's necessary goods,
 And all beside is only luxury.

Eud. No, my lov'd parent, all the wreck of fortune
 From my swollen breast hath never wrung a sigh,
 For while these hands are mine, decrepit *WANT*
 Shall never dwell within our peaceful mansion.

Bel. Then cheer your drooping spirits, and when cares
 Intrusive rush upon your gentle mind,
 Bring them to me, and with the tenderest love
 I'll try to soothe, or freely share them with you.*

[*They retire into the castle.*

* And with his hand he wip'd the falling tear from her cheek.

Enter TIBERIAS from an opposite gate.

TIBERIAS.

Ah! there she moves, the empress of my soul,
Whom still I follow as yon *golden flower*
Turns to her idol SUN. Sweet innocent,
How do her virtues gild this solitude,
And make even *exile* enviable!
But must they radiate forever here?
Shall a bright bud of such rare excellence
Shed all its fragrance in the wilderness,
And *only* bloom for him who cannot see?
Oh! would that it were mine, I'd bear it hence,
And fondly place it in a kindlier soil,
Where every latent beauty might shoot forth,
To bless *my* heart and charm the wondering world.
If I may but obtain her---if those blushes
That burnt upon her cheek as I address'd her,
And told her how I lov'd---if they assented,
Oh! then, not all the treasures of the sea,
Nor all the victories by battle won
Since first this world was fram'd, were they all mine,
Could yield one transport like that I should feel
Possessing my EUDOKA. But 'tis time
That I should hasten to the impatient Emperor---
To-morrow's setting sun shall find him here, [Exit

ACT THE LAST.

SCENE---*The Chamber of Arsaces.*

ARSACES (*sitting on a black sofa*) in mourning---*soft music*---
he waves his hand---*the music ceases.*

ARSACES.

CEASE, cease fond strains, ye can no more delight,
Your softest warblings grate upon my soul,
For *she* in whom *all* harmony did dwell
Is dead!----

-----Yes, the insatiable grave
Hath swallowed my beloved---she hears no more---
Quench'd is the rayful lustre of her eyes,
And every pulse lies still. Envious spoiler,
How hast thou robb'd me of all I did love!
Oh! I was rich, the wealth of the wide world
Could not have bought my treasure---'twas my joy
Daily to ponder on its innate worth,
And through the watches of each tranquil night
It gilt my every vision. Remorseless Death!
Now thou hast plundered me, no wretch that crawls
Along the common way, and sues for bread,
And takes the flinty pavement for his pillow
Each cheerless night, is half so poor as I.

Enter BARSAMES.

BARSAMES.

Why all this grief ARSACES?

Ars. Ah! can'st thou ask, BARSAMES? Is not the *star*
That guided my soul's actings set forever?
Or shall the blushing morning of delight
Dawn ever on my sever'd heart again?

Barf. Doubt it not, my sad friend, you still are young,
And flowery years of happiness await you,
In which the memory of all former woes
Shall sink as in the ocean.

Arf. No, never while this breast shall know to feel
Can I forget the melancholy image
Of my lov'd JULIA dead---Oh! yes, I saw her
Stretch'd on a bed, a poor, insensate corse,
Pale as yon marble; while the gory streams
That from her face had issued, lay congeal'd
Upon her ice-like bosom---mournful picture,
Oh! can I ever lose thee?

Barf. Come lay these tears aside, they are unmanly;
Beside, the EMPRESS she hath sent me hither
With warm professions of her kindest friendship:
Ask what you will, she grants you your request.

Arf. Then all I ask is that I may reside
Near the lone cemetery where my love,
In darkness veil'd, sleeps an eternal sleep;
Where I may nightly wander, and recall
Ideas of joys long past---where I may sit
And pluck the weeds that shoot around her tomb,
Or sadly sympathetic join the wail
Of the lone dove that perches on her urn.

Barf. The Empress waits to see you at the palace---
Will you attend me?

Arf. I will, my friend. Oh! my afflicted spirit! [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE---*The Portico in the Garden of* BELISARIUS.

BELISARIUS *sitting alone---Time, near Sun-set.*

BELISARIUS.

What tho' thy rays, oh! luminary bright,
Glow not superbly on these eyeless sockets,
Infusing glorious LIGHT as heretofore;
Yet doth thy vital warmth encompass me,

Cheering the limbs benumb'd by frosty age;
 And through thy medium my soul adores
 Thy bountiful Creator, whose wide hand
 Diffuses most munificently GOOD.
 To Earth's unnumbered creatures.

Enter TIBERIAS, JUSTINIAN, and AGRESTIS.

TIBERIAS.

My General, here I bring to your retreat
 My venerable father, and a friend.

Bel. Then let me press them fondly to my bosom,
 For though they're strangers, yet I love them much
 On your account, my amiable young man.

*(Tiberias leads the Emperor to Belisarius's embrace---
 the Emperor sobs aloud.)*

But why this voice of sorrow?

Tib. My father, penetrated by your woes,
 Yields you this mournful tribute of compassion.

Bel. May HEAVEN's choicest gifts descend upon him,
 Nor till the lamp of life sheds its last lustre
 May he e'er want the pity he bestows.

Emp. Oh! cruel Monarch, who could treat you thus!
 Who thus could rifle you of every joy!

Bel. Not so, my neighbour, I have comforts yet,
 Which amply compensate for all the ills
 My variant life hath known--- Though here you find me
 The aged tenant of this ruinous pile,
 Deserted by my Sovereign, poor, infirm,
 Yet I review with joy six glorious lustres
 Devoted to the service of my country,
 And mark'd with splendid triumphs. Still one pang
 Off clouds the sunshine of my brightest hours,
 And checks my rising exultations.

Tib. And what is that?

Bel. It is, lest my JUSTINIAN should expire,
 With the persuasion of my treachery

Instampt upon his heart---oh, grievous thought!

Emp. But do you still, forgetful of his outrage,
Think of him with affection?

Bel. Most sure I do;
And oh! may no remembrance of *my* griefs
Disturb the visions of his tranquil slumbers,
Nor dim the peaceful setting of his sun;
But may -----

Emp. No more, my friend, (*aside*) this tenderness o'er-
comes me;

He merits your upbraidings more than blessings:
Where can he boast of such another friend?
Ah! who will ever trust him after this?

Bel. Reproach not my old Sovereign, for, alas!
He is still more unfortunate than *me*;
He saw not for himself---he was deceived;
Nor do I wonder at it: envious men
Construed each patriot deed of mine
Into *ambitious selfishness* and treason;
And then, some *unexplained* acts gave weight
To every warm assertion; all was laid,
Distorted and deform'd, before his Majesty---
And he is but a man.

Cour. What were those unexplained acts you speak of?

Bel. A seeming acquiescence to the GOTHs,
When they petition'd me to be their KING;
And making the proud throne of GILIMER
My seat of *Justice* when I conquer'd Carthage:
This, and the clamorous honours of the people
Whenever I return'd from war, victorious,
Raised a suspicion in my master's breast,
That I was leagued with all the mal-contents
That would aspire to place *me* in his seat.
To close the whole, a *plot* was then discover'd
To massacre the Emperor and his friends;
And as all the conspirators expired,
Refusing to divulge their leader's name,

(Though they sustain'd the torture) *Calumny*
On me fixt the foul deed; but HEAVEN does know
How differently I was then affected.

Emp. Oh! what a source of everlasting sorrow,
Deep groans of anguish, and remorseful tears,
Has the sad Emperor, did he but know
The heart of him whom he hath made thus wretched!
---Kindness unlook'd for! o'er each cruel act
The hand of love casts an excusing veil.
---Oh! miserable sovereign!

Bel. Cease these complaints, respect his sinking age,
And learn from this a lesson---that all men
Are frail; 'twas not a *crime* to be deceived,
'Twas a calamitous event, for *which*,
Should he e'er learn the truth, he will repent.

Emp. He does, he does!---Oh! that the shroud of night
Would hide his whelming shame!---Yes, dear old man,
Here at your feet the unjust tyrant kneels,

(Clasps the knees of Belisarius.)

And if his *tears* could but efface his guilt,
Would weep his life away!

Bel. Forbid it HEAVEN!---What, is my Sovereign here!

Emp. Yes, he is here---the vilest of all men---
Infamous beyond all that sin---cruel,
Undone, detested, base, ungrateful!

Bel. Oh! rise, my royal master; let not grief *(Raising him.)*
Immoderate thus degrade you: why should my Lord
Be humbled thus before an abject being?

---Though you was led to err in *this one* instance,
Yet the admiring world can witness for you,
That you are not a tyrant; and the vast good
Your bounty hath diffused, obliterates
The smart of whatsoe'er hath fallen on me.

---Forget not then to reverence yourself,
My noble sire, when all the world reveres you.

Emp. Your goodness veils me in a cloud of blushes!
My matchless friend, my brother, never, never

Can I make restitution for the wrongs
That I have pour'd upon you.

Bel. Oh! yes, my generous Sovereign, this compunction
Much more than compensates for all.

Emp. Then shew the world my pardon: come with me,
And let us part no more: your sapient presence
Is necessary for my future comfort:
Come and reside with me, that men may see,
If I by calumny have been seduced,
I own a heart that knows to wail its crimes.

Tib. (taking Bel. by the hand) And will my friend, amid
this grateful scene,

List to the applications of TIBERIAS?

Will you consent to make him happy too?

Bel. What is it you demand to make you so?

Tib. ALL that you own, save *innocence* and *peace*.

Bel. My daughter?---Yes, my heart accedes with joy;
You are deserving of my GEM, Tiberias;
Take her, my son, and may revolving years
In all their changes only find you blest.

Tib. (kneeling) May peace benign attend you to the grave
For this your precious gift, my honoured father!

[*Rises and exit.*]

Bel. Now the best wishes of my heart are answer'd!
Brought to my much-loved Emperor's arms again,
Forgiving and forgiven---to place my child
Beneath the fostering care of generous LOVE---
Oh! it renews my age, and makes my heart,
That mansion late of woe, to sing for joy.

Re-enter TIBERIAS with EUDOKA.

EUDOKA.

What would my honoured father?

Bel. Oh! my loved child, kneel, and demand a blessing,
On your approaching nuptials, from the Emperor.

Eud. The Emperor!

Emp. Fair creature, yes: Oh! turn not from me thus,
Nor let those eyes dart such indignant rays:
Behold me humbled, see me bathed in tears,
The bitterest tears of anguish for my crime.
But now, since Belisarius has forgiven
The nameless griefs that I have made him suffer,
Let the free pardon of his dutious daughter
Approve her father's deed, and seal the blessing.

(Tiberias takes her hand---they kneel.)

Under the ministry of gracious HEAVEN,
May angels shed their influence divine
O'er all your paths, protecting you from evil--
Aid you to crush each rising wish unlawful,
And lead you in the way of holy PEACE!
---And when you fill the throne I soon must quit,
May the remembrance of my death-like sorrows
Deter you from the cruel use of power,
Lest you, like me, when verging toward the grave,
Should have to drain the deep cup of Repentance.

Bel. Surely the changeability of fortune
Never shone more conspicuous than in me.
---And Oh! may men, when gathering wreaths of fame,
Pause a few moments in their golden travel,
And spend a casual thought on BELISARIUS!
---And henceforth, may no poor afflicted soul,
Though drench'd in tears, and deep ingulph'd in woe,
Look off from HEAVEN, and call himself forsaken;
But, in his gloomiest hour, may he reflect,
That from behind the darkest cloud of sorrow,
The Sun of Joy may rise supremely bright.

F I N I S.

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